



News Release

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Immunizations for children should be part of your summer plans

Protect your children from vaccine-preventable diseases before the back to school rush

OLYMPIA — Get a head start on a healthy school year by making sure summer plans include getting your kids fully immunized. Make an appointment now before the rush of sports physicals and yearly checkups makes scheduling more difficult.

“When we send our children to child care or school, we don’t want them to catch dangerous illnesses like whooping cough or measles,” said State Health Officer and pediatrician Dr. Maxine Hayes. “Vaccine-preventable diseases spread quickly in schools — immunizations can protect our children and our communities.”

Washington’s school immunization exemption rates show that many of our state’s children are vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases. Whooping cough has increased in Washington, with more than 600 cases of this serious disease in our state last year. Measles also poses a growing threat to our kids and four cases have already been confirmed this year, including one identified yesterday.

Parents can find out which [immunizations are required for school and child care attendance](http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize/default.htm) online (www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize/default.htm), and should request their child’s vaccination records now to allow time for an appointment with a healthcare provider if additional immunizations are needed. Children who are up-to-date on recommended immunizations meet school and child care entry requirements.

Although exemptions are allowed for medical, religious, or personal reasons, the best disease protection is to make sure children have all their recommended immunizations. Children who aren’t fully immunized may be sent home from school, preschool, or child care during outbreaks of vaccine-preventable disease.

A new law effective July 22, 2011 changes the process for parents or guardians to exempt their child from school or child care immunization requirements. Under the new law, parents must get information from their health care provider about immunizations. The health care provider must then sign a Certificate of Exemption form for most types of exemptions. More information about [the form and the new law](http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize/default.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize/default.htm) is available online.

All recommended vaccines for children under 19 are provided at no-cost through Washington's Childhood Vaccine Program. Health care providers may charge an office visit or administration fee, but this can also be waived for those who cannot pay. For help finding a health care provider or an immunization clinic, call a [local health agency](http://www.doh.wa.gov/LHJMap/LHJMap.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/LHJMap/LHJMap.htm) or the [WithinReach](http://www.withinreachwa.org) (www.withinreachwa.org) Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

([Listen to State Health Officer Dr. Maxine Hayes](#) talk about immunizations using the MP3 audio clips on our back-to-school immunizations page (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/NewsRoom>).

The [Department of Health website](http://www.doh.wa.gov) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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